

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Appalachian Mountain Club, I write to ask you to support Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways, and Recreational Trails.

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants program to \$6 million. In Fall 2021 DEEP issued a request for recreational trails proposals with only \$3 million available. It received 65 applications requesting over \$22 million, of which the highly ranked proposals alone totaled over \$7 million. Although \$3 million was granted to twenty worthy projects, we expect the ongoing need for investments in Connecticut's outdoor recreation infrastructure to continue.

The Appalachian Mountain Club is the nation's oldest conservation and outdoor-recreation organization, with 12 chapters and nearly 100,000 members, many of them in Connecticut. Our volunteer leaders typically offer 1,000 guided outdoor activities per year, most on the trails of Connecticut. With the increased interest in the outdoors that we saw in the last two years, it is important to maintain and improve the outdoor recreation infrastructure. This bill will assist in that effort. As a Guilford resident and member of its town conservation commission and local land trust, I benefit from programs like this one that have allowed my town to boast that 20 percent of its land is conserved.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this matter.

Sincerely,

Janet Ainsworth  
Appalachian Mountain Club